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PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

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A TRAGEDY.

61163.
ac.

BY

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SIMCOX, M.A.

SX. P. 29

Λύσεν δὲ Ζεὺς ἄφθιτος Τίτανας.—PINDAR.

LONDON:
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1867.

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TO

HENRY NETTLESHIP,

FROM

HIS FRIEND AND FELLOW-STUDENT,

G. A. SIMCOX.

PREFACE.

A POEM after the antique is likely to be a failure, and such failures are mischievous, because they lead us to exaggerate the difficulty of entering into a literature greater than our own. Still it may be a legitimate ambition (for those who have a right to be ambitious) to continue the poetry of a period which it is impossible to reproduce. Because a modern writer necessarily shares the sympathies of his own day, he is not excluded from those of the classical past. If the Attic tragedians were free to select Homeric situations in which to display the subtle conflict of post-Homeric feeling, a modern writer need not resist the attraction of a classical subject because he is certain to approach it in a post-classical spirit. Beside the influences which have grown up since classical times, there will be a

change in the perspective of the original elements of the subject. Sometimes critical erudition may bring us back to the ancient point of view. We naturally think of the funeral honours paid to Aias as a mere excuse for Sophokles to display the fraternal courage of Teukros, and the generosity of Odusseus to a fallen enemy; but we understand, when it is pointed out to us, that they have a deeper meaning, as proving that his expiation was accepted, and that his final condition was honourable. But criticism is powerless where an ancient writer has been carried beyond his age by influences which act still more strongly on ourselves. It is useless to tell us that Dido's second love was in itself an outrage upon Roman sentiment, even if it had not been a hindrance to the sacred destinies of Rome. For us the Fourth Book of the *Æneid* is nothing but a record of the cruel desertion of a loving woman. It is equally useless to point out how many elements enter into Aischulos' conception of the *Prometheus Bound*. It is nothing to us that Prometheus had claims upon the gratitude of Zeus, that he had nothing to gain and something to lose by premature submission; it is nothing that the ravings of the horned half-human

maiden were a legitimate sensation for a Greek audience, who were open to be impressed by vague and solemn adumbrations of Egyptian legend and remote geography. To us, except so far as we are restrained by reverence for Aischulos, Io is at most a picturesque, perhaps a tedious, impertinence; and Zeus is an injustice to be resisted, not a power to be recognized. To us the suffering Titan represents the sublime of benevolence; in Aischulos he is the martyr of his own presumptuous independence, quite as much as of his rather contemptuous pity for mankind. Hence the rebukes of the Chorus are only the natural expression of Greek sentiment, which would have seen less dignity in an eternity of useless misery and impotent blasphemy than in the limited beneficence, the qualified self-respect, which are possible to the not unkindly prudence which accepts the inevitable. To a Greek, the pride of the Titan was admirable, not because it was a protest in behalf of abstract right, but because it rested on rational certainty. The supremacy of evil would make the idea of right unmeaning, for right which is not supreme is inconceivable; Prometheus knew that the same necessity which made his wisdom useless for a season, would here-

after make that wisdom indispensable to his adversary. The action of the play of Aischulos, so far as there is any, is to be found in the growing exasperation which overclouds Prometheus' calm foresight of this purely ethical retribution, with a passionate desire for the unconditional downfall of Zeus. But it is clear that this exasperation must ultimately have been subdued by the prophetic wisdom of Prometheus himself, who could not but consent to the reconciliation which he foresaw. It is more doubtful whether his struggles against his own foreknowledge are a fit subject for dramatic art, and whether the open secret about Zeus' marriage will bear to be brought into the foreground of a play.

It is by no means certain that, if we had the lost play of Aischulos, it would have supplied an answer to these questions. Hermann has shown that we have no reason, beyond *à priori* plausibility and the doubtful authority of a scholiast, for assuming that it was a sequel to the *Prometheus Bound*. The first of these arguments would prove that the *Antigone* of Sophokles was composed as a sequel to the *Oidipous Koloncios;* and the second is overweighed

by the improbability that Aischulos, or any other good writer, would have made Prometheus extol his own merits, tell the story of his sufferings, and convey recondite geographical information, in two plays intended to be acted on the same day. Nor is it probable that in one play he would have represented Kaukasos as a distant point, which Io would reach after traversing the whole extent of Skuthia, and then made it the scene of Prometheus' suffering in another which was to form part of the same trilogy.

Under these circumstances, there is much plausibility in Hermann's conjecture, that the *Prometheus Unbound* was composed first; especially as none of the fragments or notices which have come down to us suggest the idea that it was written under the pressure of the *Prometheus Bound*. We can still reconstruct the lost play in outline, and it does not bear the stamp of the profound conception, or the perplexed technicality of denouement, which strike us in the *Eumenides*. The Titans came to visit their suffering kinsman; he told them in the well-known passage translated by Cicero what he endured, and why; he nar-

rated all he had done for men; Herakles, the noblest of men, came to ask his guidance on his journey, and repaid him by slaying the eagle which devoured his liver; meanwhile, Zeus had prepared a victim of celestial race willing to redeem Prometheus by laying down a burdensome immortality. After this, Prometheus might be allowed, without too much servility, to present Zeus with a sprig of Agnus Castus, and a ring from his chains. If he revealed that the son of Thetis would be more glorious than his father, the communication of so great a secret served to place him for the moment in a position of superiority to the king of heaven, since the communication was made freely, not extorted by the threats of a tyrant or the importunity of a master. Such a catastrophe may be disappointing to us, for our ears are ringing with the haughty words of Prometheus in the later play, and of all his imitators, from Milton's Satan to Mr. Mill and Mr. Swinburne; but the audience of Aischulos, far from expecting a solution of the highest problems of theodicy, were at leisure for information about the Gabioi, the most righteous and most hospitable of men, who reap the harvests which they have no need to sow; and about the country of the

Ligues, which did not supply Herakles with a single stone wherewith to continue the contest when his arrows were spent. Even the Titans, it seems, dilated on the distance they had traversed to condole with Prometheus, in terms calculated not only to magnify their sympathy, but to enlarge the spectator's conception of the habitable globe.

Of the writers who have treated, more or less directly, the problem which Aischulos bequeathed to the literary world, Herder finds the substantial solution in the philosophic joy with which Prometheus looks upon the progress of mankind. We feel that the arbitration of his mother Themis is almost too formal to be satisfactory, and perhaps the world of Olumpian deities is thrown too much into the background. The same objection, if it is a real one, would apply to the profound fragment of Goethe, in which the action begins before the creation of mankind, and the metre, which seldom scans, and never rhymes, is almost repulsive in its austerity. But few things in metaphysical poetry are finer than the scene where Athene persuades Prometheus to obey her father's command to animate a

finite universe, destined to become independent of the infinite despot who calls it into existence. Still more admirable is the fiery purity of the second act, where Pandora awakes to a passion which she does not understand, and which Prometheus refuses to interpret. In England, Coleridge instigated his son Hartley, ineffectually, to write a *Prometheus Unbound*, in which Prometheus should be the representative of Reason, Zeus of Law, on the ground that Shelley's conception was essentially vulgar, *i. e.*, both obvious and false. Coleridge's second epithet recoils on himself, and the first is inapplicable to a poet who had the original idea of making Herakles unbind Prometheus, in the nineteenth century of our era, after Zeus had fallen before the incarnation of democracy. Quinet has pushed the audacity of Shelley to extravagance, for the greater part of the first act of his Prometheus is devoted to the colloquies of two of the holy angels on the aspects of nature and the prospects of humanity. I have not seen Schoemann's poetical restoration of the lost play of Aischulos, which proceeds upon the supposition that it was a sequel to the *Prometheus Bound*, and is respectfully mentioned by Professor Blackie.

The relation of Athene to Prometheus in Goethe recalls another form of the legend, where the seduction of Athene is part of his offence. This again reminds us of the attempt of Hephaistos, another fire-god, to violate the inviolable maiden, and may give plausibility to a conjecture that the obvious etymology of Prometheus' name is an after-thought, and that the true derivation is the Sanscrit Pramantha, or fire-churn. This would be analogous to the transformation of Kantharos, the beaker which goes with wine, into a hero who conquers in the train of the wine god. In the same way, silver-footed Thetis might be made the representative of the glancing surface of the sea, which seems to be vainly wooed by the sky that bends over it everywhere and touches it nowhere; while Peleus, the namesake of Pelion, would represent the brown earth of Thessaly, which is washed by the clear sea water.

But when we turn to another version of the legend given by Pindar in the Seventh Isthmian Ode, where Themis appeases the strife between Zeus and Poseidon or the hand of Thetis, by announcing that her son will

be more glorious than his father, we begin to suspect that the theory is baseless, for it would be forced to make Poseidon the ruler of the deep which would swallow up the sparkling water.

My critics will be better judges than I of the extent of my obligations to authors whom time and genius have consecrated; I am conscious myself of two or three imitations more or less direct. Any resemblance to contemporaries is probably due to the influence of the age. Any one who may trouble himself hereafter to inquire when such passages as the opening chorus or the autobiography of Peleus were written, will be guided by internal evidence very near the actual date, the winter of 1863-4.

It will readily occur to any ladies who may do me the honour of reading my book, that a Frenchman would be unreasonable who insisted on using the English equivalents for German names, and that an Englishman who insisted on using the Latin equivalents of Greek names would be little better. Accordingly I have kept the Greek

spelling everywhere, simply writing the letters in their English shapes. If we are to speak of Aïdoneus and Poseidon, instead of Pluto and Neptune, we may as well follow the Greek orthography; and if so, there can be no reason for changing Phoibos into Phœbus, or Aischulos into Æschylus. As to the pronunciation, I would suggest that *u* should be sounded like the modified *ü* in German; that the first syllable of Ouranos should be pronounced like *pour*, not like *hour*; and that Aïdoneus should be pronounced as a quadrisyllable, A-i-do-nëus.

Oxford, April, 1867.

ARGUMENT.

PROMETHEUS took part with Zeus against Kronos, because Zeus was ready to contend by guile, but Kronos and the Titans were for open force, and Prometheus knew that by guile the victory would be won. Now, when he had made Zeus king of heaven, he gave fire to men to comfort their estate; but Zeus, being envious against men, caused him to be chained upon Kaukasos. Howbeit, Prometheus knew that, unless he should warn Zeus against Thetis, he would take her to wife, and beget a son who should take away his kingdom; and in this knowledge he vaunted himself, but Thetis' name he did not speak. Wherefore, Zeus sent from heaven

to ask what he meant; but he made no answer, and Zeus buried him under the earth, and with him a company of ocean nymphs, who had come to comfort him. Notwithstanding, after many years the earth opened and set the ocean nymphs free; but Zeus sent a vulture to feed upon Prometheus' liver by day, and it grew again by night. Now, after the war of the giants, the times of the heroes drew nigh; so the ocean nymphs brought from the tower of Kronos the flower whereby Hera was to conceive Ares, god of war. At that time came Peleus, the son of Aiakos (who was to espouse Thetis indeed, as Prometheus also knew). And Thetis herself was with him; for Peleus would inquire of Prometheus how he might atone the Curse of his brother Phokos, whom he had slain, and Thetis was troubled with dreams foreboding her marriage with Zeus, which was not to her mind. But Prometheus wrought hard with her to be queen of heaven, and she would not; nor, when Hermes came, would she

consent to him; so Hermes bound her and led her away. Then came Herakles, by the counsel of Phoibos, to inquire what road he should take to find the oxen of the Sun, stolen in Spain by Geruones. And Herakles slew the vulture, because Prometheus told him all that was in his heart to know; and as he tarried, Hermes came with tidings that Zeus had loosed the Titans, for the love of Thetis, and would loose Prometheus also, since Cheiron being very sore wounded desired to die. For Zeus had sworn that Prometheus should not be loosed till an immortal was content to die for him. Now Prometheus was ready to serve Zeus while he should reign; but Hermes required him to serve him for evermore: so Hermes departed in anger. Herakles also departed; and the Curse came again to Peleus, and bare him away to Pelion. Then the Titans came upon Prometheus and the ocean nymphs, and cast them away to the ends of the earth, because Prometheus had taken part with

Zeus against them. Then a fear took Zeus, and he sent Hermes for the third time to let Prometheus go, and being sick for desire of Thetis, he could not abide his messenger's coming again, but set forth himself to release Prometheus. There the Fates and the Curse of his father overtook Zeus; but Prometheus taught him a name to be safe from them for a season. So they loosed him, and they parted in peace; but Zeus let Thetis go.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CHORUS OF OCEAN NYMPHS.

PROMETHEUS.

PELEUS.

THETIS.

HERMES.

HERAKLES.

CHEIRON.

ERINNUS.

TITANS.

PROMETHEUS.

Τέχνη δ' Ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῷ

CHORUS.

τίς οὖν Ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστρόφος;

PROMETHEUS.

Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες.

CHORUS.

τοίτων ἄρα Ζεὺς ἐστιν ἀσθενέστερος;

PROMETHEUS.

οὔκουν ἂν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην.

* * * *

CHORUS.

Μηδ' ὁ πάντα νέμων
θεὸς' ἐμᾷ γνώμᾳ κρατος ἀντίπαλον Ζεύς.

Æsch. From. Vinct.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

CHORUS.

FROM the islands of the west,
Where the valiant spirits rest,
Who were true when they were tried,—
For their righteousness defied
The fury, and the malice, and the vengeance of the king
To whom the Three have given
To torture earth from heaven,—
I come as heretofore,
To listen to thy lore,
In faith across the waters borne on thunder-crippled wing,
With neither sail nor oar.

PROMETHEUS.

Woe unto me who lure you with vain love!

CHORUS.

From the city of the prison
Where no sun hath ever risen,
Under ancient Kronos' tower
I have plucked the bloody flower.
Neither sun nor rain,
Neither earth nor air
Fostered it or fed it there;
By the tempest of his sighs,
By the flashing of his eyes,
By his tears and sweat of pain,
It was nourished,
And it flourished,
And it prospered to be fair;
For a god's blood is its root,
And a bloody god its fruit;—
The son to Hera given,
To trouble Zeus in heaven
Whilever he shall reign.

PROMETHEUS.

Woe unto me who vex you with vain strife!

CHORUS.

Underneath the iron shore,

Where the leaden billows roar,

I have heard taunts for sighing, and a laugh above a groan,

And a noise of expectation

Where pain was still before.

And the king of that sad nation

Cannot sleep upon his throne.

For the icy mountains shake

And the Titans are awake,

Every one lifting up his scarrèd head,

Stretching his chains upon his fiery bed,

To hear the vain rejoicing of the master of the sky,

And to listen for the foot-fall that shall cast him from on high,

When the lofty shall be lowly and the lowly ones shall reign;

When wisdom shall tame bitterness, and hatred shall be vain.

PROMETHEUS.

Woe unto me who fool you with vain hope!

FIRST NYMPH.

Prometheus gave us kindlier welcome once.

SECOND NYMPH.

Perhaps he hears the vulture's wing afar.

THIRD NYMPH.

He suffers still; we mock him with new joy.

FOURTH NYMPH.

Or idly prate of what he better knows.

FIFTH NYMPH.

We hoped too greenly of the giants' war.

SIXTH NYMPH.

And unfledged hopes that leave the nest are starved.

SEVENTH NYMPH.

He warned us then that patience ripens hope;

EIGHTH NYMPH.

To harvest over-late in famine time.

NINTH NYMPH.

In sooth, I fain would know for what we wait?

TENTH NYMPH.

A stumblingblock thou art too weak to move.

ELEVENTH NYMPH.

And wherefore know the ills we cannot change?

TWELFTH NYMPH.

Hope known is sweet, outreaching ills unknown.

PROMETHEUS.

Ay, question not too soon of shame to be.

CHORUS.

Soft songs and patience fit us best.

PROMETHEUS.

Yea, sing.

CHORUS.

Silent mother of the rain,
Who cleanseth earth, thy sister, tenderly
With showers and dew, from dust and stain,
Veiling her parchèd face with holy broidery,—
In blood, and wine, and fire, thou hast no part,
O my mother, under sea ;
Take the gift that thou canst keep,
As I pour my chaste drink offering of maiden tears to thee,
Without beating of the breast,
Or a sob to heave the golden belt above my sackcloth vest ;
It will melt the freezing snow-drift, it will cool my aching heart,
Though thou and good gods sleep.

Who hath made it sweet to pray
To thee, and them, who neither chide nor hear,—
To lean upon a shadowy stay,
Calling on sleeping Hope, waking her nursling Fear ?
I cannot praise the unavailing strife

Or the cruel victory;

Both are pillars of the throne,

Where a king, whose crown is foolishness, doth judge iniquity:

Only one I see to praise,

Who hath steady feet established on slow straight upward ways,

Looking beyond good and evil, looking beyond death and life,

To what shall be alone.

Only to know the end

Glorifies impotence,

Healing by wisdom ills without defence;

Blind strength and greedy violence

Do but the more offend

The masters, whom we serve while we rebel;

And helpless innocence

Hath peace, but without light, which is not well.

Wherefore I have left my chamber under sea,

To weep, and worship innocence with thee,

Full of the fruit of wisdom's bitter tree,

To temperance most sweet.
So I kneel here in the snow,
With my thirsty lips aglow,
Straining my lily neck to kiss thy feet.

Comfort him, mother mine,
Sorrow is far from thee,
Simpleness girdeth thy felicity,
A buckler against pain ; and we
Pour to thee tears for wine,—
Not questioning why ; who pour no prayer to Zeus,
For his great majesty.
Since no prosperity or passing use,
Ay, and no haste of questioning,
Is mightier than piety,
Who leaves, she knows not why, both power and pride,
To flourish, and go by,
Unseen of her who prays,
Walking with shadowy staff in viewless ways,
To those who seem neither to hear nor chide.
To-morrows make a murmuring,

And yesterdays about her shrine
Full of the hidden glory of to-day,
Unchangeable, divine,
The inestimable prize,
Her portion hidden from her own pure eyes,
Till famine and the shadow flee away.

Wherefore, taming all the throbbing of my heart,
I wait with thee until the end apart,
Captive like thee, until I learn the art
To be my own release.
Is it not enough to wait
On the slow, just lips of fate,
Comforting wayfarers with words of peace?

PELEUS.

Hail! reverend flower of blighted maidenhead!
Hail! Titan, smitten of him who since smote me,
Who looses me, and will loose thee anon!
Hail! windless calm of ruinous rock and ice,
And smiling waste of snow; and hail! all hail,
Peace! youngest daughter of Necessity,

Who crushest all my heart beneath thy kiss,
Because I fought against thee like a god,
Being the son of gods, and hating shame
And weakness, sent of thee to lead me here.

CHORUS.

Hail, stranger! ere we ask the storms that tost
Thee to glad haven on a dreary shore.

PELEUS.

Yea, maidens, many gales of sin and woe
Swept me from out that happy course I kept.

CHORUS.

Ah, twice unhappy, to have lost much joy,
And won much evil, cured by little hope.

PELEUS.

The gods give strength and weakness unto men;
My soul hath drunken thirstily of each.

CHORUS.

Better to thirst than drink the cup of men.

PELEUS.

Ye say it who are thirsty, and not I.

CHORUS.

And dost thou roam unburied, without hope?

PELEUS.

The hope of mortal men is always nigh—

CHORUS.

Who thirst after the nectar of Zeus' house—

PELEUS.

No, for the new wine of Persephone—

CHORUS.

Pressed from the grapes that Hebe gathered not—

PELEUS.

Gods do not gather what they planted not.

CHORUS.

Who treads that wine-press, then? who sowed that seed?

PELEUS.

Prayers sow, the lame Hours prune, and Ate reaps—

CHORUS.

A lamentable vintage among men—

PELEUS.

For the strong Fates to tread upon their throne.

CHORUS.

So Ate gathers where she did not sow ?

PELEUS.

For Ate is the mother of our prayers.

CHORUS.

Wise stranger, let me praise thee by thy name.

PELEUS.

Men call me Peleus, son of Aiakos.

CHORUS.

What taught thy lore, another's woe, or thine ?

PELEUS.

My father's lessons taught me, and my deeds.

CHORUS.

The deeds which taught such lore were sweet to hear.

PELEUS.

The tale is wearisome to holy ears.

CHORUS.

Waiting more wearisome to eager hope.

PELEUS.

Immortals, who vouchsafe to sport with me,
Pray you choose one among my many shames;
Since I came hither not to speak, but hear.

PROMETHEUS.

Content them, telling them why thou art here:
I will prepare my mouth to answer thee,
And her who brought thee hither, as ye ask.

PELEUS.

We were three brethren seven years ago,
In salt Aigina of the Murmidons,

When stalwart Telamon and I went forth
To Kolchis, for the famous fleece of gold;
But Phokos, careful of my father's age,
Lay still, and bode in ambush for the isle.
We prospered, and gat glory, and returned,
And found our father dead, and Phokos king,
Who banned us not to leave our ships, and died—
A righteous death by an unrighteous blow.
Two gave the counsel, one the hand. That night,
A pale thing, like my mother, crowned with snakes,
Came, and she suckled me with blood and gall,
And laughed, and sang, "Sweet boy, I love thee so,"
And kissed me, and her kisses burned like ice.
I tore her bosom and her slimy hair;
But she sat still, and laughed, and sang, and kissed,
And held me there to drink until the morn.
Going, she girt one of her snakes round me,
That hissed, "I cannot sting on Kaukasos;"
And when I strove to crush or pluck it thence,
It tightened, till I felt it on my heart.
Thereafter buffetings of plumeless wings,
Lithe whips of fire, and red eyes, looking out

From clouds, which followed me to hide the sun.
Yet for all this I would not shelter here,
But set my might to fight with hell, and die.
But hell disdained me, and his torments ceased,
And there was left me weakness after strife,
The memory of the burning and the sting,
The hissing of the snake about my heart—
"Prithee, why not at peace on Kaukasos?"
Last night I slept, and dreamt I was a child,
And woke to see the thing I saw before;
But she was crowned with palms, and Phokos stood
Beside her, and he held an olive branch,
Whose face shone like clear twilight after storm,
And his words murmured like moist wind in reeds,
"Rest him, he bare such bitter things in vain."
She answered with a foamless surge of sound,
"Son, all sin and all sorrow hath his fruit,"
And kissed me, and I melted at her kiss,
Nor knew if I trod earth or saw the sun,
Or lived or died, for all was liquid light,
Wherein I walked, or floated without feet,
To the sea caverns under Pelion,

Where lady Thetis lapped me in her veil,
And bore me over dancing billows here.

PROMETHEUS.

Oh, vain enduring hope! deceivable,
Unprofitable gift of prophecy!
To run full sail upon the shoal, and know it,
To plough the sand with bleeding feet, and know it,
To give myself for fleeting men, and know it;
For men that call Zeus father: this is knowledge.
And then revenge: Zeus to bow down to me,—
To bow, or fall, who would not choose to bow!—
To bow to-day, then trample evermore;
Since so they worship Nemesis in heaven.
Surely I have no help of what I know!
What help to hide a treasure in the hand,
To hold it fast against the thunderbolt,
Thinking I famish now, but I shall feast,—
And have it turn to ashes? I have nurst
The fruit of vengeance with the dews of pain,
Patiently sheltering it from stormy hours,
But shall not eat thereof. Consider it,

Look on us ; we are gods, Aiakides :
And now four hundred years we suffer here,
I, nailed on an uneasy upright bed,
She, tost upon a feverish surge of hope ;
And no deliverance comes, no pledge of rest.
Yet, suffering all these things, we do not die
As men do, who go down into the dark,
To sleep uneasily, but yet to sleep
The not unrestful sleep of hungry souls.
But hitherto we have endured in hope.
She hopes for something which she has not heard ;
I hope for something which I dare not speak,
Lest one among the many spies of Zeus
Should hear her name whose son shall cast him down,
And Zeus should know my threats are not of air,
And leave his rioting in many loves.
And this I know, and cannot boast aloud.
And ye, the mortal brood of yesterday,
Swarm at my feet ; and in this little life
They crowd more thoughts than all my brother gods,
The Titans, yea, than I ; for all my thought
Fades now into one memory and one hope :

And hope and memory, like two seas that meet
In a tempestuous nook of rock-bound waves,
Toss my heart, driven before the gale of wrath,
On the dark overhanging cliffs of fate,
Whence it falls bleeding back into despair;
And then thy puny patience lessons me.

PELEUS.

What could I say but what thou hadst foreseen?

PROMETHEUS.

I could foresee much more that thou wilt say.

PELEUS.

I only spake before at thy desire.

PROMETHEUS.

Much hast thou spoken: little to my mind.

PELEUS.

How did my rash tongue wound thee, suffering thus

PROMETHEUS.

My sufferings matter little to thy tongue.

PELEUS.

I reverence pangs too strong for me to bear.

PROMETHEUS.

But more dost reverence unrighteousness.

PELEUS.

In whom?—who own and loathe it in myself.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou art more righteous than the king of heaven.

PELEUS.

His laws are made for me, and not for him,
As many wizards preach whom thou hast taught.

PROMETHEUS.

I knew my teaching would not profit men;
I knew the fire would be to worship Zeus.

PELEUS.

Some say, Would we could profit him who gave;
Zeus loves the savour of our sacrifice.

PROMETHEUS.

Rooted in the wise pride of slavishness
Like thee, what deigns your piety to ask?

PELEUS.

Clean rites to purge my hands of kindred blood,
That I may have an holy house on earth.

PROMETHEUS.

If thou wilt build thy brother's monument,
And fast thereon three days, then bury there
All things of his he loved, and shave thy head,
And bathe thy body in the blood of bulls,
Men upon earth shall praise thy holy house.

PELEUS.

But will the gods, and shadowy dead in hell?

PROMETHEUS.

That hell's remembrancers shall tell thee here.

PELEUS.

What is the aspect they are clothed withal,
And in what language do they speak to men?

PROMETHEUS.

Thyself hast seen the face of one before ;
It was for thee to hearken to her voice.

PELEUS.

She told me we should meet with gladness here.
But was she of the awful ones, whose grace
Sends up fat fruitfulness from under ground ?
Methought they hunted sin with ravenous mouth,
All in full cry at once, hell's two-foot hounds.

PROMETHEUS.

Ay, when men flee them—as thou didst not flee.
Hell is right glad of such a playfellow :
Even now they weary till thou come to them,
Even now prepare thy pleasaunce under ground,
With budding flames, and fruit of molten gold.

PELEUS.

Titan, since thou hast told me all my mind,
Mocking me also, who am mortal man,
And thou wise god, and uttering bitter things

Which I would not have uttered, who have done
What I would have undone, I answer not
In his behalf, who bound and looses thee;
But thank thee for thy comfortable lore.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou wanderest blindly at thine own desire;
I hang here wearily, defying Zeus,
Cheering his victims with dim light of words,
Looking down through the sordid sea of things,
To see the dim day rise which looses me,—
And always fouler weeds grow over it,
Till my soul loatheth it,—and it is nigh.

CHORUS.

I thought a day should come to honour thee,
And shame the mighty tyranny of Zeus.

PROMETHEUS.

Shameful to Zeus, to me not honourable;
But, bought by two friends' scathe, that day shall con

CHORUS.

What friends of thine, what scathe, if Zeus shall fall

PROMETHEUS.

Cheiron shall die ere then, and Herakles—

PELEUS.

What harm awaits the man I honour most?

PROMETHEUS.

Madness from over-zeal to help the wise.

PELEUS.

He were already mad who helped thee not.

PROMETHEUS.

Well I have yet one comfort in my pain,
One little jest to chuckle at alone:
The fire is lighted that will burn up heaven
And hell, and thee and Zeus, and gods and men.
Ah! wilt sing hymns to Zeus, when thou and he
Are burning? He hath made such holy laws
For thee,—for thee, remember, not for him.

THETIS.

Prometheus, thou hast spoken fearful words
Against the holy Quiet over heaven,

Elder methinks than heaven, and Zeus and thee,
And in that Quiet, venerable laws
Nestle about a throne we have not seen.
Such speech is ill. Prithee now comfort me,
Me, an immortal, sick with many dreams,
Me, though immortal, trembling before Zeus,
Whom I have never cursed or disobeyed.
For, shepherding the flocks which have no fleece,
When I would lay them to their rest, and sleep,
Methought the silver sceptre of the seas
Brake, piercing the closed lily of my hand;
Then waking, or else dreaming that I dreamt,
I walked upon deep waters, stirred by wind,
That danced, and leapt, and swarmed with welterir things,
Lumbering round my vesture and my feet,
All ravenous after woe and wrecks of men.
Then, when the cheerful daylight came again,
The seaweed curtains of my maiden bower
Were shrivelled up with lightnings, rent with storms,
And fiery fingers paddled in my hair,
And wrote on pearly walls, False queen of seas,

Thy place is on Olumpos, and not here.
So Zeus confounds my mind with prophecies.

PROMETHEUS.

And thou hast been obedient unto Zeus?

THETIS.

If I have spoken truly of myself.

PROMETHEUS.

Therefore his prodigies are plain to thee.

THETIS.

Then I must be the mother of his child.

PROMETHEUS.

For thou hast been obedient hitherto.

THETIS.

O lamentable doom of maidenhead!

PROMETHEUS.

To have the king of all the world for spouse.

THETIS.

To give all mine, when his is almost gone—

PROMETHEUS.

After uncounted years his power is young.

THETIS.

To take the leavings of so many loves—

PROMETHEUS.

As every maiden doth for mortal man.

THETIS.

Yes ; they die, and their sorrow dies with them.

PROMETHEUS.

Zeus is immortal, and his heart is whole.

THETIS.

He overlives his loves so easily.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou wilt not overlive thy glorious son,
Than whom no mightier ever hath been borne.

THETIS.

A wife should love her spouse above her son.

PROMETHEUS.

A father loves his son above his wife.

THETIS.

Not such a husband as my soul desires.

PROMETHEUS.

Thine old obedience will not profit thee.

THETIS.

Mine old obedience was unfeigned, unbought.

PROMETHEUS.

So paid by Zeus with centuries of peace.

THETIS.

All my desire hath always been to nurse
My maidenhead's pale blossom under sea.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou dost not hunger for its glorious fruit?

THETIS.

Not till the sun of love shall ripen it.

PROMETHEUS.

Now, therefore, lest thou harden all thy heart
Against the signs of the omnipotent,
Hear thou the things which shall befall thee here.
First, on his knees, the herald Argicide
Shall proffer thee the wooing gifts of Zeus,
With loving greeting from the king of kings.
Then if thou be obedient, as in days
When Zeus dealt roughlier both with gods and men,
The Hours, pillowing thee on moveless wing,
Shall bear thee to Olumpos' golden gate.
And that shall open, at their kiss, to thee.
Then, as thou enterest the clear halls of heaven,
The gods and goddesses shall come abroad,
From bower and banquet, with one mind and mouth
To worship thee, O queen, their master's bride.
But before any other see thy face
Thou shalt be folded in the arms of Zeus,
And thou and he shall melt in one embrace,
Till shuddering rapture fall upon all heaven.

THETIS.

In all this I have neither part nor lot.

PROMETHEUS.

But if thou cherish barren maidenhead
Unwisely, sending out the thunderbolt,
The king shall break thy sceptre, in no dream,
To loose his brother's tempests upon men.
Then, if nor gifts nor thunder bend thy mind,
Hermes shall bring thee bound before his face,
Whence one harsh look hurls thee to Tartaros,
Where thou shalt die an everlasting death,
Not soothed by the forgetfulness of sleep,
Not quickened by the consciousness of pain,
(For pain hath pauses, almost rest, and end),
But death like that I die: a living death;
One long dull misery; intolerable,
Not being cheered, as mine is cheered, by hate.

PELEUS.

Myself will guard thee, lady, with my life.

THETIS.

Rather revere the brother of thy sire.

PROMETHEUS.

Her counsel fits thy new-born piety.

THETIS.

Shall I be still when Zeus deals thus with me?
I never loved to kick against the pricks.

PROMETHEUS.

Others are dearer than thyself to thee;
Others have had worse wrongs from Zeus than thou.

CHORUS.

Methinks I spy the herald's gleaming staff.

THETIS.

Brother, put up the sword that will not wound.

PROMETHEUS.

There still is time to think upon my rede.

THETIS.

I thank thee, Titan, ere I disobey.

HERMES.

Most beautiful, and crown of every love,
To him who searches all the world for love,

Like a bee, gathering sweets from every flower,
Until he find the essence of all sweet
In one clear honey drop! Behold his gifts,
His richest, such as shame thy beauty least,
But feeble tokens of his mightier love;
Yet think from these, that there are halls in heaven
Not all unworthy to reflect thy light,
Since all things sue to Zeus, who sues to thee.

THETIS.

His gifts are lovelier than my fairest thought,
Shaming my silly face, unworthy heaven;
Zeus is far loftier than to sue to me,
And I much lowlier than to mate with Zeus.

HERMES.

Dally not, lady, through an idle doubt
Of thine own greatness, with Zeus' love. Be sure
He sees his honour in my embassage;
Wherefore let nothing keep thee back from love.

THETIS.

Nothing, O friend, should keep me back, if love
Drew me with bands embroidered with desire.

HERMES.

But Zeus, and all the majesty of heaven,
Are worth desire above the weedy sea.

THETIS.

Yea, praise thy sire ; love is not born of praise.

HERMES.

Zeus heard thy praise, therefore he burns with love.

THETIS.

The fire, before I kindle, will be spent.

HERMES.

The heart of Zeus is little in thine eyes.

THETIS.

Nay, but too large to melt in any love.

HERMES.

Lady, we bandy here unhelpful words.

THETIS.

A pleasant respite from unwelcome deeds.

HERMES.

Bethink thee, if thou baulk the love of Zeus,
Lest hungry love turn to devouring hate.

THETIS.

Therein I chiefly fear the love of Zeus;
How could I bear the hate of him I loved?

HERMES.

Remember, Zeus is king of all the world.

THETIS.

And every maiden queen of her own heart.

HERMES.

Lady, behold the gathering thunder-cloud!
Zeus hears us, and I know how he will speak;
One word would conjure all the tempest now.

THETIS.

I cannot speak the word that Zeus would hear.

CHORUS.

A flashing from on high
Hath shattered her fair sceptre utterly,

And reft her watery radiance all away.
Most pitifully fair,
We see thy beauty bare,
Or only veiled by tears from common day.

HERMES.

Since, lady, thou wert advertised of this,
Thou mayest forebode what more I have in charge.
Intolerable to do, and sad to tell.
Thou therefore spare my voice, and spare my hand,
As knowing Zeus can mend as well as mar.

PROMETHEUS.

She hath been advertised, and heard her doom
With one fear only, and that one fear vain,
Lest haply she should struggle in thy hands.
Hitherto she will worship maidenhead,
Not pitying thee, nor Zeus, nor even men.

THETIS.

I spare thy voice, but cannot spare thy hand
To bring me duly bound before the throne,
Whence, if so be, I fall to Tartaros,

Since truth and chastity are more than men.
Bind me with gentleness, for I am weak.

HERMES.

These hands were made to kiss, and not to bind.

THETIS.

Fate moulded them, and puts them to her use.

HERMES.

I pray you have some pity on yourself.

THETIS.

Bind me for pity then; talk wearies me.

HERMES.

Forgive me, as I do thy will, not mine.

THETIS.

Thanks, gentle servant of Necessity.

CHORUS.

She cannot set thee free,
Seeing another judgeth her and thee,

And all beside unpityingly just.
The master and the slave,
The coward and the brave,
Are counted in Death's balances as dust.

HERMES.

I heed my father more than women's tongues;
Wherefore I bring thee, Thetis, to the face
Of him who loves thee, though thou disobey.

THETIS.

I have not yet begun to strive with Zeus.

CHORUS.

Io went up of yore to be the Thunderer's bride,
Pale between fear and pride,
Not of her will provoking Hera's frown.
Dragged by a curse from home,
Driven by her own sire to roam,
Helpless, unpitied, without guide or friend,
For many days, in madness up and down.
Doth it at all repay
Her soul for all that weary way,

That, honoured in her end,
And blindly rich to bless,
She, riding with the hornèd moon, rains down rank fruitfulness?

THETIS.

Behold, I go away,
Captive of maidenhead
Wherever I am led,—
From the dear twilight of my watery day,
The briny fragrance of my pearly bed,
Into the pitiless blaze of the unsheltering sky,
Where the Almighty, whom I cannot praise,
Nor will blaspheme, is lifted up on high.

CHORUS.

Ah! who will carry me
Into eternity,
Far above where Thetis goes,
By a path no herald knows,
Into darkness full of light,
Where the gods are out of sight?

But somewhere there be set—
Above the change of smiles and tears,
Which mark the time of hell and heaven
While slow earth counts by years—
On the uncreated throne,
Solitary, fathomless, alone;
Three, who weave a viewless net
To snare the feet of all
Who walk beneath in thrall,—
Soon or late:
Since unto them is given
The power of the queen without a name,
Whose foster sister here and minister is Shame,
To bridle love and hate.

PROMETHEUS.

What would not help at all ye ask too greedily.
What is eternity?
What is the treasure-house of things unseen?
The leaden hours come thence,
And many stings for quivering sense,
And all the shame which hitherto we bear.

More plagues are there for us, if madding spleen
Make us sick and blind with spite,
Until we quench our inner light,
To seek our vengeance there.
To-day, or not at all;
To-day, for once and aye, my curse shall bring a king to fall.

THETIS.

Unhalting guide of souls,
Tenderly pitiless,
Tell me how their distress
At passing o'er the shadowy stream, which rolls
The unbridged water of forgetfulness,
Round all the silent land,
Fades at thy holy voice;
How all forget to sorrow, when thy wand
Unseals their eyes on realms where none rejoice.

CHORUS.

Falling like balmy dew
On weary eyes that rue

Fading summer's golden flight,
Thetis' holy words again
Lull the fever of my pain
To a stillness past delight.
Before my labouring heart
Was tost upon a stormy wind;
Since both her pride and resignation
Confounded all my mind,
Whether I should pity her,
Whether I should blame her, in despair
Of the unprofitable part
Of helpless liberty:
Since only Zeus is free.
All below
Are fed with wrong, and indignation
To sauce their ills; but now my soul is meek,
And seems to find, because she does not seek,
Tamed to the kiss of woe.

PELEUS.

Above the pride of Zeus, above the Titan's strife,
There is a holy life,

Full of the breath of an exceeding peace.
Those who are purest here,
Passing the portals of that sphere,
Gasp once or twice in the unembodied air;
But everlastingly they find release;
Where, as I well believe,
She, whom I love too much to grieve
For what she wills to bear,—
My lady enters now,
Where ghostly crowns of kisses are made ready for her brow.

PROMETHEUS.

Feed upon fancies of thine own device;
She hath for ever left all joy behind,
And strength and gladness of her watery sway.

PELEUS.

Her purity is far too blest for mirth;
But wherefore didst thou woo her maiden lips
Against her heart, with nought to hope from Zeus?

PROMETHEUS.

I see thou hast heard half the oracle.

PELEUS.

What oracle? I know none touching her.

PROMETHEUS.

That Thetis falls to thee, disdaining Zeus.

PELEUS.

Is this the sentence of the destinies?

PROMETHEUS.

I say it, and I think to be believed.

PELEUS.

How shall I serve her with due reverence?

PROMETHEUS.

Thou hast one half the prophecy to hear.

PELEUS.

Tell me, for all I hear of her is sweet.

PROMETHEUS.

Ye shall rejoice in one most glorious son.

PELEUS.

His praise shall fill up my unworthiness.

PROMETHEUS.

But he shall die, and shall not bury thee.

PELEUS.

Enough to see his fame, and close his eyes.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou shalt not see his battles or his death.

PELEUS.

I soon shall see his spirit undergroun—

PROMETHEUS.

When plundering neighbours vex thine age to death.

PELEUS.

Why wound my ears with taunts of future woe?

PROMETHEUS.

Which were away had Thetis wed with Zeus.

PELEUS.

Zeus is far worthier; but her heart is free—

PROMETHEUS.

To deem thee worthier, to her woe and thine.

PELEUS.

Thou seest the sunshine, and foreshowest the storm.

PROMETHEUS.

For I am in the storm, and thou wilt be.

PELEUS.

Why make me grieve like thee before the wound?

PROMETHEUS.

I grieve to salve my wound with greater shame.

CHORUS.

Behold! What moving bulk of human might
Ploughs hitherward the unsown field of snow,
With front and shoulders like the labouring ox?

PELEUS.

I saw a patient strength like this before,
When Herakles sailed for the fleece of gold.
But this is vaster, sadder, and more still.

HERAKLES.

Dear Peleus, know me for the same, though worn,
And haply strengthened, by more toils for men.
Thou also art more holy in thy looks,
Though thou hast borne and done what makes thee grave,
So that I joy to see thy settled face,
Who thought to meet Prometheus here alone.

PROMETHEUS.

The signs were thick before; they multiply.

HERAKLES.

Phoibos, by whom my father speaks to men,
Said thou couldst guide me on a dangerous way,
To win his cattle stolen in the west:
Wherefore I came to thee to ask thy rede.

PROMETHEUS.

Straight westward, and at speed, the cattle pine.

HERAKLES.

And is this all? Thou art too bountiful
To grudge me answer for my father's sake.

Moreover, prophets, holier than to lie
For greed or glory, have avouched to me,
That he shall pardon thee, and thou save him,
Which must be known to thee who knowest all.

PROMETHEUS.

The cattle pine; I am not infinite.

HERAKLES.

I heard that there was nothing hid from thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Yes, I have learned how hungry heifers low.

HERAKLES.

And more than this, which I was sent to hear.

PROMETHEUS.

And wherefore sent? Thou wilt not miss thy road.

HERAKLES.

I seek to learn what lies upon my path,
That I may meet it as becomes a man,
And purpose as a man to recompense
Thine ancient love of men, and slay thy plague,
And hope to loose thy fetters; for my sire

Hath made me much the strongest of his works,
As thou art wisest: men would have great gain
If we could wed thy wisdom and my strength,
And pay thy love, for all thy weary pain.
But pardon, ere my hand approve my tongue,
My promise, made too soon to show my love.

PROMETHEUS.

O very noble son of evil sire!
I thank thee so much more for thy goodwill
That I am nought advantaged thereby,
Thy father's world being other than thy thought,
My lore much narrower than thy towering hopes.
I also know those twain can never meet
Whose meeting feeds thee with a vain desire.
Fashion one spirit wise and strong at once
Thou canst not; Kronos would not; Zeus will not;
But captive each to each in endless war,
The wise are ever weak, the strong unwise.

HERAKLES.

But this is profitable, if one look
From the beginning even to the end:

Since often it hath been my evil hap
To hurt where I would heal, by hindering help.

PROMETHEUS.

This plague is common among gods and men ;
It doth not touch me, but I have my own,
And hang on Kaukasos for only this—
Because I am not blind to baulk my will.
Thou, therefore, keep thy feet from such a snare,
And keep thine eyes from prying into shame,
Since who knows much has also much to hide,
And who knows all knows more than can be hidden ;
And all who know have little left to love,
Little to hope, little indeed to fear ;
But still their fear is nearer than their hope,
And if their fear could cease their will would die.
But blind wills live and change, and find new food
In things that wholly slay the seeing will.
There still lives a free purpose in thine eye ;
Be warned, and set thy strong face to the west.

HERAKLES.

Titan, my purpose rather holds me here ;
How can I rust the keen edge of my soul,

Journeying westward in a mist of mind,
Feeling it settle first about my face,
Clouding my eyes, and choking up my breath,
Till it should freeze the pulses of my strength ?
For I have heard that knowledge is a good,
And heard that ignorance is the dam of sloth.
But knowledge filleth thee with bitterness ;
Thou callest her mother of impotence.
I do not think the Muses make men blind,
I do not think that thine are lying lips :
Thou, therefore, use thy will to show or hide
What meets me on the journey that I go ;
But this is not in any noble choice
To trouble whom one hath no mind to calm.

PROMETHEUS.

O Herakles ! all labour is but evil,
All knowledge but an evil tool of toil,
Knowledge like mine a tool that wounds the hand.
Hope throws a ray upon one spot of work,
It matters little which ; it hides the end.
But palsying knowledge reaches on and on,
Forward and backward, till we lose the now.

Time lies before me like an open book,
Writ in a tongue that only I can read,
Where fiery letters swim before mine eyes,
Rolled and unrolled by hands which are not mine.
Once I could read at will—then I was strong ;
Now I read all I grow more weak and wise.
Wherefore my heart is hardened unto men,
My work, Zeus' prey, and now his pampered slaves.

PELEUS.

Thy work grows happier, yet thou art not glad.

PROMETHEUS.

I, therefore, am a slave, and not a prey ?

PELEUS.

Thou art too high for pity, they are not.

PROMETHEUS.

I have been pitiful, I would have loved.

PELEUS.

Love feeds on giving—thou hast given thine all.

HERAKLES.

Love's blossom fades, the seed of pity lives.

PROMETHEUS.

Sometimes the seed of scorn finds fitter soil.
But wilt thou hear thy road, or question more?

HERAKLES.

No; I have heard enough to muse upon.

PROMETHEUS.

First thou shalt journey over icy ooze
Of shallow seas, and salted treeless plains,
Ranged thinly by bald men, who worship swords,
Which win them nothing but sour milk of mares.
Then, after fifty days, thy sore feet find
The lamentable forest full of gnats,
Which keep the rich soil fat for weeds alone,
And barren trees, meet only for the axe;
But thither no axe comes, nor plough, nor swine.
Beyond are hills, fruitful, and full of mines,
Which would be fair, and full of vines and wheat;
But having learnt to work the brass and gold

With fire, men honeycomb the holy hills,
And have their fill of all things, save of wives
And beauty ; for one serves the need of seven ;
Because she-children are so ill to rear,
She saves but one to earn the wage of seven.
But they are rich, and gay, and use her well,
And she is proud of her unseemly work.
But beyond these there lives a poor chaste folk,
Not worth corrupting, in thick shadowed marsh,
Where there is little sun, and store of fish ;
Which thou shalt traverse in five weary days,
Feeling thy strength unstrung for lack of foes.
But going up the river, thou shalt find
A water-bull wrestle three days with thee ;
And thou shalt take his horns and hoofs and hide,
And carry them for after need with thee.
Then thou must cross sharp hills of treacherous snow,
And icy rivers, bounded o'er by goats,
With deep clear lakes, where filthy villages
Stand out on piles. Thence, for pure timorousness,
Dwarf savages shall aim poor darts at thee,
Unwinged, and tipt with flint ; when these shall fail,

Their silly speech shall hail thee for a god.
But southward, jealous of the rich champaign
Of many rivers, hard to dispossess,
Envied of all, and fierce, the Liguans dwell,
Who choose to let no stranger pass in peace.
These for seven days shall sate thy soul with fight,
And after that shall bar few strangers' way;
For thou shalt slay the flower of all their youth.
Then shall the rest be driven to bleak bare hills,
Which thou shalt traverse first of men; then skirt,
On beetling cliffs, a blue smooth smiling sea,
Tenderly lapping palms and olive-groves.
Thereafter, o'er a plain of many floods,
Thou comest unto hills of chestnut woods;
Thence, to parched plains, and rocks that saw the sky;
And last, unto the ocean's watery door,
Where the hot sun goes hissing under sea,
Between two towering piles of pillared rock,
Which everlastingly shall bear thy name.
There is the lair of him who stole the kine;
And thou shalt hear them lowing eve and morn,
What time their master goes abroad to rob.

Then thou shalt don the water-bull's black hide,
And break their prison with his golden horns.
Thence they shall follow thee three nights and days,
Hushed at thy beauty, deeming thee a bull,
Till thou shalt doff the hide for weariness.
Then they shall low; and he who stole shall hear,
And thou shalt see him coming on at speed,
A wheel of might, three bodies and one head,
Whereon three faces ravening divers ways,
With twice three arms to clutch, and twice three feet
To wound or stand, yet all too weak for thine.

HERAKLES.

Thanks, I have heard according to my need.

PROMETHEUS.

Hence. It is enough: my daily plague draws nigh.

HERAKLES.

A man should stand in evil by his friend.

PROMETHEUS.

Leave me to bear it, as is best, alone.

HERAKLES.

Thou shalt not bear it longer, I will stay.

PROMETHEUS.

Depart, lest thou be partner in my curse.

HERAKLES.

Zeus sent me to be partner in thy lore.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou wilt not slay thy father's winged hound?

HERAKLES.

I am his son, and all he hath is mine.

PROMETHEUS.

To use at his will, not to waste at thine.

CHORUS.

A little speck of shade,
Growing apace to a bulk of grey,
Hath overspread my day;
And all my ear
Is pierced with a clangorous note of fear,
From the livid wing, and the bill embrued
In the side of a god, with costly food.

HERAKLES.

My bow is bared, and drawn, be not dismayed.

CHORUS.

Winged with uncounted prayers,
Journeying late on a righteous track;
Thine arrow turned not back;
But drank its fill
Of blood, with a pitiless steadfast will,
And the wings were folded, the beak shut fast,
And I smiled, for my agony was past.

PELEUS.

Pray still, our sky is overcast with cares.

HERAKLES.

One thing well done is earnest of much good.

PELEUS.

A righteous will approves a work half done.

CHORUS.

Son of a little day,
Yet mightier than I,
Whose ancient deity

Hath long in vain desired the thing which thou hast done,

How many days shall run
Before the time shall come for thee to go away
From the fickle radiance of the earthly sun;
Since Death, who shrinketh far from me,
Weak though I be,
Is mighty against thee?
Then I and many shall long in vain
For the glorious purchase of thy loving pain.
Prithee stay,
For we shall all wax faint, when thou dost go,
Journeying at a churl's bidding to and fro.

HERAKLES.

Mine eye is true to aim a little way;
Fate but shuts in my gaze to loose my hand.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou would'st be free and blind; so would not I,
For I am often lifted up in heart,
Considering what shall be when Zeus shall fall.

HERAKLES.

Zeus fall? Remember I am son to Zeus.

PROMETHEUS.

I know. The son shall die: the sire shall fall.

HERAKLES.

When? How? Which first, and why? Answer at once.

PROMETHEUS.

Thou first, deluded by thy father's curse.

HERAKLES,

What curse? I have not done my father wrong.

PROMETHEUS.

Did I not warn thee not to slay my plague?
For thou shalt slay thy children, ere thou die
A bitter death, wrought by a loving wife.

HERAKLES.

Surely he visits not so heavily.

PROMETHEUS.

He swears the curse even now in Hera's arms.

HERAKLES.

The children of the gods are strong, not happy.

PROMETHEUS.

Destiny doth not fear unhappiness.

HERAKLES.

What! Are the Fates then stronger than the gods?

PROMETHEUS.

Mightier and elder than the gods and Zeu

HERAKLES.

Are they not daughters of my father's voice?
Declare to me their number and their names.

PROMETHEUS.

Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos,
Three seeing daughters of the first blind Wish,
Which Ouranos begat on the Abyss,
Whose mother died in giving birth to them,
And from her dead womb sprang Pleasure and Pain.

HERAKLES.

Had they a father, or were fatherless?

PROMETHEUS.

The uncreated Love is first of gods.

HERAKLES.

Why are there, then, no altars unto Love?

PELEUS.

Where are true priests to offer frankincense?

CHORUS.

Only the gods can worship Love aright.

PROMETHEUS.

Nor men nor gods can rightly worship Love.
Love hath one only priestess in the world,
Who offers him an endless sacrifice
On every altar both of earth and heaven,
Salted with her own purifying tears—
His sister, and you call her Nemesis,
With whom of old my mighty works were done;
And even now I speak her prophecies,
As Phoibos speaks the prophecies of Zeus,
Whom I defy, because I know her name,
Wherein much more is hidden than I can think,

But in that name I hide me, and endure,
Counting the years upon my weary watch
Of cloud-compelling Zeus, the lord of heaven,
Of echoing Poseidon, lord of seas,
Of wealthy Aïdoneus, lord of hell,
Till bright Apollon, lord of glory, reign.

PELEUS.

Tell me her name; teach me to count those years.

PROMETHEUS.

Zeus listens long to overhear her name,
Known unto both of them who went before,
Which he forgat for pride when Kronos fell;
The vulture came because I spoke it not.
As for the years, the sum would drown thy thought,
And thou wouldst die ere thou couldst count the half.
It wearied *me* to number them till now.
Yet I will tell thee something of their signs,
For near deliverance lifts my mind to-day,
As when I first took clay and made a man,
As when I warmed his heart with fire from heaven.

Then I looked forward through glad work to shame,
For Pain walks hard upon the heels of Joy,
And makes a gap for Shame to enter in.
Now I look forth through feeble shame to rest.

CHORUS.

But now thy shameful plague is duly slain.

PROMETHEUS.

Yes, and old use will make me miss my bonds.

CHORUS.

Thy limbs will be renewed when they are gone.

PROMETHEUS.

I shall not be more fearless, or more wise.

HERAKLES.

Are my hands strong enough to sunder them?

PROMETHEUS.

They shall be loosed to-day, loosed without hands.

PELEUS.

Something constrains me, too, to bid thee wait.

PROMETHEUS.

Now hearken to the signs, ere Hermes come
On his last embassage to Kaukasos.

CHORUS.

Say first, why Ouranos and Kronos fell,
Knowing her name whom Zeus desires to know.

PROMETHEUS.

Ouranos, coveting to sit alone;
Kronos, because he hated guile and toil,
Fell, with rebellious will and open eyes.
The younger race shall fall in blind desire.
Whilever Zeus the thunder's lord shall reign
Men, bowing underneath a leaden sky,
Shall labour on in jealous quietness,
Fretful, and never satisfied with good,
Fenced by uneasy Peace, the child of Fear,
Like such as journey on a frozen sea,
Heaving already with the storms of spring,
And this is the beginning of their woe;
Until Poseidon, lord of seas, shall reign,

And men shall battle about Thebes and Troy,
To win undying fame in joyless strife.
For all the flood-gates shall be broken down
Which barred the passionate current of their strength
From sweeping all their fathers' works away.
Then wives shall travail but three months with child,
And children seven weeks old shall sing to Fame,
And Hope, who walked before with Memory,
Holding her hand, looking another way,
Shall stand on tiptoe, pluming fiery wings,
As ready to take flight into the dark;
While women, with young hearts unsatisfied,
And thin grey faces, by an unsailed sea,
Put hoary locks about her flying feet,
Kneeling all day upon a cloudy shore,
Till wailing winds cast down the stars from heaven.
Then Aïdoneus, lord of hell, shall reign,
When all the stars, that shine about the moon,
And the great sun, shall shrink into the sky,
That they may circle further from the earth,
And hell, the heart of earth. But after that

There shall go up a mist from Acheron,
And men shall drink it in with harvest air;
And it shall wreathe itself about their eyes,
And it shall wreathe itself about their hearts,
So that no man shall know his brother's face;
But they shall walk as strangers in a crowd,
Each doubting his own heart: and in those days
The seeing men shall shriek, the blind men sing,
And little children wander with grey hair,
Dancing through cities overgrown with moss,
In shady streets, unto the blind men's song;
While Patience rends her bloody vest, to bind
The straining eyes of Hope until the morn—
Until Apollon, lord of glory, reign,
Leading to earth red-handed Righteousness,
And brooding Peace, and rosy Purity,
Glad Truth, and laughter-loving Innocence,
Grave Wisdom, and clear-visaged Perfectness,
Who weld a yoke of living gems for Joy.
Then hell shall be as earth, and earth as heaven,
When heaven shall teach us how to think thereof;
And no more smoke go up from Tartaros.

CHORUS.

Whence comes the Argicide with gleaming face?

HERMES.

From Zeus, with messages part glad, part grave.

PROMETHEUS.

Well, say them glibly out, and then begone.

HERMES.

Zeus is prepared at last to pardon thee.

PROMETHEUS.

I thank him; I shall pardon him to-day.

HERMES.

But thou must bow the knee, and own him just.

PROMETHEUS.

All in good time, when he hath knelt to me.

HERMES.

I see that many troubles craze the wise.

PROMETHEUS.

I almost thought I saw a civil fool.

HERMES.

Prometheus, Zeus is quit of fearing thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Indeed! because the fatal son is born?

HERMES.

He trembles at that stale device no more—

PROMETHEUS.

And sent thee all this way to tell me so?

HERMES.

Zeus needs thee not, but yet he pities thee.

PROMETHEUS.

I pity Zeus in his great need of me.

HERMES.

He has unriddled all the oracle:
Thou art a rusty key he needs no more.

PROMETHEUS.

Who gave the shining key to let him in?
Who taught him where to find fools' paradise?

HERMES.

Self-taught he fathomed all the mystery.

PROMETHEUS.

Self-taught: that means the scholar of a fool.

HERMES.

Zeus is the teacher of the wise on earth.

PROMETHEUS.

Yes, since in spite of him there must be wise:
He teaches them the follies he will do,
To fright or sadden them to do the like.

HERMES.

Zeus will not let thee fright or sadden him.

PROMETHEUS.

So Thetis is cast down to Tartaros?
Well, other of Zeus' loves will follow her.

HERMES.

No, for I saw her crowned the queen of heaven,
And parting, stooped to kiss her lily hand.

CHORUS.

What force or honied guile prevailed with her?

HERMES.

Zeus swore to loose the Titans for her sake,
And loose Prometheus too, to quit old scores,
Since Cheiron is content to die for him.

PROMETHEUS.

Kings when they try cannot be merciful.

PELEUS.

I do not think that death is cruelty.

CHORUS.

But why is Zeus at rest about his child?

HERMES.

Because he swallowed Metis in a kiss,
Who brought no son to day; but from his head

Flashing, as with ten thousand thunderbolts,
Athene sprang full-armed—I tell a tale
New it may be on earth, but old in heaven—
Whereby Zeus knows that Metis would have borne,
Had he so willed, the mightiest god of gods.
Wherefore he bids thee, Titan, own the truth,
As being wise, and yet less wise than he,
So much for thee: for you, if he rebel,
He warns you not to harbour here with him,
And chiefly you, his grandson and his son,
Lest a worse evil take you than ye know.
For soon the new loosed Titans will be here,
Strong to hurl mountains as of old in wrath,
Angry with him by whose deceit they fell,
Angry with such as deem his foul cause fair;
I also, though I be not eldest here,
Bid you remember (Thetis found it true)
My father gives no wounds he cannot heal:
For others, having wounded, strike again,
Lest they be stricken, to forestall revenge.
So on one harm their fear begetteth hate,
And hate, made fat with harms, conceiveth death,

But kings are not in bondage to their deeds.
And now what answer shall I take my sire?

PROMETHEUS.

I thank him, and it does not trouble me.

HERMES.

And thou wilt serve the everlasting king?

PROMETHEUS.

Yea truly, but his name will not be Zeus.

HERMES.

Speak not in riddles, for my father waits.

PROMETHEUS.

Plain tenderness is dark to giddy ears.

HERMES.

What purpose canst thou have in flouting Zeus?

PROMETHEUS.

None; I shall kneel before his throne to-night.

HERMES.

Speak truly; Metis' son was in thy thought.

PROMETHEUS.

Yea, had she brought a perfect birth to day,
Had Thetis been cast down to Tartaros,
Then Zeus had fallen from heaven before the time.

HERMES.

That time will never come for thy desire.

PROMETHEUS.

True, and I do not wish to hasten it.

HERMES.

See Cheiron comes to die; a truce to words.

CHEIRON.

At the last it will be well,
Where broad slanting shadows play
Over meads of asphodel,
Where the long-maned fillies neigh
In the glee of liberty,
Fearing yoke and scourge no more;

I shall gallop on the plain,
Which I shall not fear to stain
With a poisonous trail of pain,
By smooth Lethe's dreamy shore;
Where no face of God is seen,
And no temples on the green;
Where no speech of man is heard
Chasing beast or snaring bird;
But an everlasting sleep,
Mother of mortality,
Draws a drooping clinging vest,
Woven in the rosy west,
Over all—
I go to rest,
Unto slumber late and deep.

PROMETHEUS.

See Herakles thy glorious guest is here.

CHEIRON.

I wish him speedily a happy death.

PROMETHEUS.

For he shall haunt Olumpos when he dies.

CHEIRON.

Mine eyes are famished for the shady land.

PROMETHEUS.

Endure the sun which long has smitten me.

CHEIRON.

I could endure my sufferance but not thine.

PROMETHEUS.

Live on to foster Thetis' glorious son,
Who shall be strongest or of men or gods.

CHEIRON.

Go, bid the weary ox to watch till dawn,
For then there will be dewy fields to plough.

HERMES.

Endure ; for Zeus can heal a bitterer wound.

CHEIRON.

I pray you lead me forth among the dead.

HERMES.

Not till Prometheus own the rule of Zeus.

PROMETHEUS.

I own it now, it will not be for long.

HERMES.

But thou must own him king for evermore.

PROMETHEUS.

Why should I flout my king with lying hope?

HERMES.

What mean you? for I do not understand
Whether you reverence my great sire, or scorn.
Speak plainly, making answer once for all.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy sire will come: I cannot answer thee.

HERMES.

My sire to thee, from heaven! now mock me not.
How I would, even I,—but Cheiron waits.

PROMETHEUS.

Lead him where he desires, I do not mock,
Though my speech baffle thee a little while;
When Zeus hath fallen, thou wilt understand

How it became me best to worship him,
Inquire of nothing more before the time,
Since the end only answereth right at last.
Thou walkest in the dark, and I in dreams;
And thou art blind, I cannot fix my eyes,
What matter? for the world is desolate,
And seeing eyes are satiated with shame;
Since all the glories, which we seek, or see,
Are transitory, full of nothingness,
Till we inherit what we did not seek,
And eat of harvests ripened silently
Upon the desert which we planted not;
So till we taste the first fruits of that feast
I will not promise any more, or threat, "
Darkening with hope and fear what time makes plain,
By deeds, to patience of industrious souls;
But shutting up my lore within my breast,
Will cherish holy silence till the end.

CHORUS.

When the faithful race is run,
And the rest of glory won,

When the worthy work is wrought,
And the famous battle fought,
Then the conqueror, sitting down
On a throne of pure renown,
Putteth on undying flowers,
Gathered in unearthly bowers,
By the lily-handed Hours,
Woven in a golden crown.

When the evil king hath heard
That irrevocable word,
Which is sounded voicelessly
By the sentence of the Three,
Then he girdeth on despite,
And an helpless hate of right,
Then he falleth in despair,
Taken in an open snare,
Smitten without sword or spear,
Bound in sorrow under night.

So it is, and so shall be;
Out of my heart I worship thee,

Healing, unwearied might of Destiny;

Because my spirit, bathing more and more
In waters of deep calm,
Fears to blaspheme, scarce daring to adore,
Thee, who dost bear the palm
Above our envy and our grief, our pity, and our joy,
Our creaturely weak love and hate,
By whose device we forge new chains in striving for release;
Since thou art mighty to create,
And gracious to destroy,
Confounding all our purposes in peace.

PELEUS

Maidens, your song is ended over soon.

CHORUS.

Because the stranger Herakles is gone.

PELEUS.

With glad face following his father's voice.

CHORUS.

Methinks our gladness goes away with him.

PELEUS.

The coming evil overshadows us.

CHORUS.

Or ancient sorrow clouds thy mind anew.

PELEUS.

At the new warning of the Argicide.

CHORUS.

He warned thee also, yet thou art not fled.

PELEUS.

Wherefore flee now? I did not flee before.

CHORUS.

But then thy will was not the will of Zeus.

PELEUS.

And now Zeus' hidden will detains me here.

CHORUS.

So then thy free steps lagged which now are lame.

PELEUS.

For this I am encompassed of your woe.

CHORUS.

Yet strange light flickers on the Titan's brow.

PELEUS.

From moving bulks which darken our low day—

CHORUS.

Casting broad shadows, like Prometheus' own.

PELEUS.

They tread on yielding air and crumbling rocks.

CHORUS.

The Titans are upon us, they are here.

PELEUS.

Where shall we hide from this blind rush of gods?

CHORUS.

I hid here from the vulture's wing before.

PELEUS.

Thence some one eyes me with a snaky crown.

ERINNUS.

I have been long time hungering for thy kiss.

PELEUS.

Wherefore? I have been ready, though afraid.

ERINNUS.

I could not come till thine eye drew me out.

PELEUS.

Whence art thou?

ERINNUS.

From the judgment seat of God.

PELEUS.

Which way leads thither?

ERINNUS.

Many; one for thee.

PELEUS.

And that—

ERINNUS.

Lies past the ninefold streams of hell.

PELEUS.

There lead me.

ERINNUS.

Not for many lingering years.

CHORUS.

Where are the Titans, for I see them not ;
Surely it was their shadow passed on me ?

ERINNUS.

They shun to see me in the light of day,
Whom long ago they know in Tartaros.

PELEUS.

Oh, mother, or a much more dreadful god,
Have I received enough for all my sin ?

ERINNUS.

Not yet, my son; but thou shalt rest on earth,
And rest when earth is purified with fire.

PELEUS.

And Phokos,—hath he rest among the dead,
Who in his life had little strength or joy?

ERINNUS.

Half of thy pangs had made an end of him,
Pangs which shall yet be multiplied on thee.

PELEUS.

Surely I had wrong,
And I have suffered long;
Long and very bitterly, for the passion of an hour.
Where is then the power,
Which baffles all my will,
And holds me still
On the marble of thy breast,
With unaverted face,
In thy terrible embrace,
Like a little child at rest?

ERINNUS.

After a little space
Of looking on my face,
Drinking with a thirsty lip of my cup of blood and tears
Filling all thy ears
With Phokos' dying cry,
Thou shalt know why
I am sent with burning rods
Of age'ess memories,
To the dwellings of the wise,
To the darlings of the gods.

CHORUS.

My heart is sick of hope,
Sick at the last of immortality;
Change after change of misery,
Through that long horoscope
Of future days, Prometheus cast for me;
And though the Terror say—
Happy eternity
Shall wipe those tears away—

Who shall believe the tale which she hath taught?
Since pitiless Destiny
Sells dear the treasure which she had for nought
To us, who wander here,
Beneath the lengthening shadow of the towers,
Where she, too high for fear,
Sits coining unbought gold of happy hours?

ERINNUS.

Every drop of sweat and tear
Of thy long agony
Shall be fashioned far away,
For a gem for thee to wear,
In a crown of victory,
By the Daughters of the Day.

PELEUS.

Mother, I thirst; give me to drink again
Out of thy cup of pain.

ERINNUS.

Take the gift of thy desire,
And choose two more at will.

PELEUS.

Vouchsafe that without fears
I may pass into the fire,
Which girds the judgment hill
Of my father and his peers;
And when I die, bring back my strength again
To feel death's perfect pain.

Mother, thou art not alone.
Mother, who are these with thee,
Very terrible to see,
With a starry diadem?

ERINNUS.

Yea; for their work is done.

PELEUS.

Where art thou or they? I cannot number them.

ERINNUS.

Child, they and I are one.

PELEUS.

What is their holy name or thine?

ERINNUS.

Unknown.

Son, wilt thou remember us,
And thine error and thy pain,
When another king shall reign,
Who shall set thee on a throne,
Among all the merry Hours,
Laughing still on thee, though they be turned to stone;
Who shall bind us with flowers
Upon the sealèd mouth of Tartaros?

CHORUS.

Now I am all alone,
And presently my terror will have come,
And still Prometheus will be dumb
Upon his lonely throne
Of mighty lamentable prophecy.
One hope abides with me,
To lift my weak heart high,—
That Thetis yet shall be
The glorious mother of the mightiest child,
By whose first cradle cry

Earth's feud with heaven shall be reconciled ;
Because the leaden weight
Of Zeus' intolerable majesty,
Which clogged the wings of fate,
Shall leave the world to breathe in vacancy.

TITANS.

Mightily, with strength unbroken, drunken with new light of day,
We are come, and none shall scare us from our play ;
Come to see the potter forsaken of the clay,
Come to see the wizard, whom a fool hath made a prey.
Surely thou didst sell thyself for nought,
And cast the bands of brotherhood away
For a deceiving thought,
That Zeus must needs repay
Thy treachery, and not by thy decay.
We have had rest in hell,
Pillowing our mighty limbs on one another ;
And were content to dwell
Lapped in the ancient darkness of our mother.

Answer now, and make confession at the last, that we were wise,

And that simple strength is mightier than lies ;

Do not think to flout us with double-tongued replies,

Set the good and evil equally before thine eyes.

He is mute, and answereth not at all.

Behold, he thinks us blind as heretofore,

Besotted by long thrall ;

But our might doth endure,

And inwardly is nourished evermore

By brotherly accord,

In that abode of our captivity,

As round the starry board

Of Kronos' patriarchal majesty.

CHORUS.

I braved the thunderbolt with him, and lived ;

And these are not more terrible than Zeus,—

With whom they strove and overcame him not.

Tarry not, but come on and do your worst.

But, lo ! they halt, and stand agaze at him.

FIRST TITAN.

Titan, Prometheus, brother of our blood—

SECOND TITAN.

Prometheus, counsellor erewhile of heaven—

THIRD TITAN.

Prometheus, wise artificer of men—

FOURTH TITAN.

Prometheus, answer; not in hate I speak—

FIFTH TITAN.

And I, remembering old times pitifully—

SIXTH TITAN.

When we abode in heaven, and men had rest—

SEVENTH TITAN.

Before thy counsel gave the throne to Zeus.

EIGHTH TITAN.

A fatal counsel unto us and thee.

NINTH TITAN.

Yes, fate was bringing on woe unforeseen.

TENTH TITAN.

What have we done? Why wilt thou not reply?

ELEVENTH TITAN.

Speak to us, let us hear thy well-loved voice.

TWELFTH TITAN.

Being at our mercy, do not scorn our love.

FIRST TITAN.

He sleeps with open eyes; he answers not.

CHORUS.

And if he answered, would ye understand?

TITANS.

The bond should never boast against the free.

CHORUS.

My mother did not bear me unto bonds.

TITANS.

It is too late to teach thee modesty.

CHORUS.

A seemly lesson that for slaves to teach.

TITANS.

Our prison-house stands empty now for thee.

CHORUS.

But the free spirit laughs at fleshly bonds.

TITANS.

That so the flesh may pine in longer thrall.

CHORUS.

I do not know why I should talk with you.

TITANS.

Well spoken: let Prometheus answer us,
Acknowledging his sin to us and Zeus;
That so we may forgive, and intercede
To loose him: else it is a little thing

For us to cast these crumbling crags away
Into the north,—into a desolate land,
Beyond the genial courses of the sun,
Where never wayfarer comes with noise of hope,
And cheerful tidings of the busy world;
For even in this wintry wilderness
Ye had such comfort, and in hope endure;
But all is frozen in haggard idleness,
And all things shudder in the unfruitful dark.

CHORUS.

O Titans, ye have spoken a great word.

TITANS.

But one much easier to perform than speak.

CHORUS.

Prometheus, is this nothing unto thee?

TITANS.

Nothing, it seems; he holds a stony peace.

CHORUS.

Pity me; think what I have suffered: speak.

TITANS.

He did not pity us, who loved him well.

CHORUS.

Ah me! alas!

TITANS.

We do not strive with thee.

CHORUS.

I cannot leave my friend.

TITANS.

Thou canst not help.

CHORUS.

Spare him for me.

TITANS.

Spare thou thyself for us.

CHORUS.

He was my hope; I hung upon his words.

TITANS.

Our hope is sure in Zeus and our own might.

CHORUS.

Then do your worst, ye serve a falling king.

TITANS.

Shoulder by shoulder, and knee by knee,
Till the rocks be rent, and our revel be free.

CHORUS.

Although I go into the shuddering dark,
Yet in my heart the candle of my wrath
Shall burn upon the lamp of Innocence.

TITANS.

Haply her tears will put the candle out.
When she shall see the fire of Phlegethon,
Which flows for ever, burning without light.

CHORUS.

Shuddering forth on the wind I fleet,
And I leave behind me the dust of their feet.

TITANS.

We are alone upon the lonely earth,
As in the days of gold,
When men were few, and, as the beasts were, clean,
Before the dewy earth was dry and old;
For she was full of budding life and green,
Ere she was bought and sold;
For over all we cast the shadow of our mirth.

Now also we discern no mightier near,
That we should be afraid;
But in the wilderness here,
Our spirits walk in the shade
Of the smoke of cities we do not see;
They are shaken from far with a breath of fear
That blows in the sails of the free.

We are alone,—our sceptre hath gone by,—
Our battle hath been fought;
We hear no voice of supplication more,
Of men we are not blest, or curst, or sought.
What care they to blaspheme, or to adore
Us, shadowy things of nought?
The dead are not more weak than we who cannot die.

So weak to rule, and yet to smite so strong;
Stronger than Zeus our king,
Whose throne is stablished in wrong:
This is a terrible thing,
To have run unbidden to serve his hate;
But above us is Nemesis sitting long,
And singing the burden of fate.

She is singing in her state
Very softly, let us wait.
She hath sat there very long,
And the earth is full of wrong,
Which her undefilèd hands
Pour upon the fruitful lands,
Making cities desolate.
She is patient, let us wait.

The sun is warm upon the ancient hills,
As ere the earth was curst
With labour and regret and vanity,
And a great glory fills
My stormy heart, as rivers fill the sea,

Which filled a lake before,
That mirrored silently
The slumberous woods and rushes of the shore;
But the fair flower of peace withers unborn,
Under a wind of scorn:
The latter glory is not like the first,
And twilight is less fair at eve than morn.

HERMES.

Now I perceive that kings are changeable,
And laws are better masters than a king;
For no laws bid one say, and then unsay,
No laws bid do a thing, and then undo;
But kings command their sons and servants so.
How often have I flown down to Kaukasos,
Tiring the feathered oarage of my feet,
With threats, and promises, and fiercer threats,
With free forgiveness, now at last—to whom?
To one made sick and broken with the years,
To one who hearing me will not rejoice,
But misconstrue late mercy into fear,

Because his spirit, sickened by long woe,
Tastes everywhere the flavour of his wrongs.
Where is he? for upon the waste of snow
I miss the fleshly pillar of his pain.

TITANS.

Indeed thou seekest what thou wilt not find;
For we have hurled him far into the dark.

HERMES.

Where are the long-haired Okeanides?
For I was sent to both with grace from Zeus.

TITANS.

They chose their portion with Zeus' foe and ours;
But wherefore should thy father send to them?

HERMES.

A king and newly wed—you know the rest—
But half a husband, less than half a king.

TITANS.

Far thou hast journeyed; but thou hast to go
Much farther, or abide a stepdame's wrath.

HERMES.

Ay, and a father's; but methinks I see
One coming, and her voice may save my flight.

ONE OF THE OKEANIDES.

Zeus' love preventing this thy embassage,
Zeus, his own messenger, hath set him free.

HERMES.

By what persuasion did he come from heaven,
And with what pilot crossed the unshaped dark?

OKEANIS.

The love of Thetis drove him like a gale;
My wailing was his rayless guiding star.

HERMES.

This was the end then of Prometheus' vaunts,
That Zeus should kneel to him ere he to Zeus?

OKEANIS.

No; Zeus bowed down to him, and that with joy,
For he hath spoken nothing without end.

TITANS.

All this is strange and nothing without God.
Tell us what God of gods so ordered it
As every thing befel, from first to last.

OKEANIS.

In a waste land and uninhabited,
Cast out beyond the setting of the sun,
And rocked upon the cradle of dark winds,
We waited, and the dark was over us,
As are the swallow's wings upon her nest;
And as the swallow's nestlings cry for food,
Piping for weariness, before they fly,
I cried, but rather in unrest than pain;
And writhed, as feeling for a sunward path.
Prometheus did not cry nor writhe, but looked
(For his eye shone with inward light on me)
Not up or down nor round—as when his gaze
Roved, sounding the unfathomable depths
Of his foreknowledge, through earth, heaven, hell;
But now—as when one having travelled far
Stands full of rest at his own door at eve,

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And, with a steadfast and uncurious gaze,
Welcomes from far a single wayfarer—
So his eyes wandered not from one far spot
Of glory, which seemed to us as the star
Which latest leaves the pastures of the night,
Dancing before the rosy car of morn.
Then drinking in deep sounds we could not hear,
He listened, as a lover, for the step
Of one beloved—with confident meek face,
As of a chidden child whose mother comes.

Then a sudden glory changed the melting snow,
To flowers and fruitage, and we saw it come—
The Hour-charioted throne of Zeus;
We saw the face of him whom we had cursed,
And it was calmer than the twilight sky,
And brighter than the summer sun at noon.
The Titan seemed a star beside the sun,
And as the daystar fades into the day,
Not setting, but is swallowed up of light,
So he, too, faded in the light of Zeus;
And in a radiant mist we heard a voice,

As of a fair young man, cry "Father, hail,
Loose me, because the briars take hold on me,
And I will teach thee where the roses grow."
But ere he ceased, Zeus, leaping from his throne,
Rending the mist, knelt to him, shrieking "Save."

For now drew nigh three veilèd Shapes of shade,
That seemed as shadows brighter than the throne,
Yea, brighter than his face who rode thereon,
And with them Thetis, clad in silver light,
Walked; but as day is brighter than the moon,
So was their shadow brighter than her light:
And hard behind them followed other Three,
Stoled in the purple of the thunder cloud,
With hem of living fire, which ate their flesh;
Their radiant brows were filleted with snakes,
Which fed upon their temples, beaded round
With fresh gore and black venom; in their hands
Were poisoned scourges grown into the palm,
And on their wan lips a triumphal smile.
These all set Zeus upon his throne again,
Because his time was not yet come to fall,

Wherefore Prometheus told him all he knew,
Whispering the hidden name of Nemesis.
Too low he whispered it for us to hear,
But as he whispered it the rocks were rent;
Prometheus staggered forward, being bound.
But on Zeus' neck the shadows put a yoke,
Graven with charactery of things to be,
And crowned him with the quiet of the stars:
And bowed the knee—and said, "We bowed to those
Which were, and will to those which are to come,
As now, almighty king, we bow to thee."

Now while Prometheus bowed the knee with them,
The eldest of his fellow worshippers
Loosed with one kiss his bonds, another brought
A chalice full of patient human tears,
Which nourish Lethe without rain of clouds,
To lave his wounds and slake his thirst withal;
The youngest girt him with a kingly robe,
Which meek Hesione, in the Asian plain,
Had broidered, weaving long with smarting hands
Nettles and sweet briars with amaranth.

Thetis went up and sat upon the car:
And then the purple Three took hold on us,
Soothing us, as we trembled in their hands,
And bound us, as we rested in their arms,
With our own girdles, knotted with their snakes,
And laid us softly down among the flowers.
We felt the car go crushing over us,
In rapture of fierce pain, which seemed too short,
And heard Zeus speak to Thetis tender words,
Saying, "Much hath come upon thee for my love,
And for thy love I have done many things,
And nothing of all this now have any fruit;
But I shall give thee to a mortal man,
And thou shalt bear to him a mortal son—
Walking no longer on the streets of heaven,
But dancing in the shallows of the shore,
By the sea caverns under Pelion,—
And resting in the islands of the sea,
Where thou shalt carry thy strong son from Troy,
Into green spiceries where soft breezes blow,
To wake him from the slumber of the sword:
There I will take thee." So the car passed on;

And Three in purple robes walked after it.
But unto us the queenly shadows came:
Bending, they kissed us through their drooping veils,
And lifted us, and we were no more bound,
And led us to Prometheus through the snow,
That we might take farewell of him in peace;
For he, they said, was going a long way
To sojourn in his younger brother's house,
To teach Pandora's children many things;
While she should help to cheer his barren wife.
But we shall be shut in with pearly walls,
And hear the murmurous tide plash over us,
Till we forget the voices of the world.
But first they bade me, ere I left the sun,
Bid all the gods to Thetis' marriage feast,
To honour her who was their queen a day.

TITANS.

Yoked too unequally,
With a partaker of mortality,
And mother of one born to die,
A son of misery.
She is cast down from high.

OKEANIS.

Love, the eternal child, shall join their hands,
And his twin sister deck the bridal bower,
Though night encompasseth the bridegroom's head.

TITANS.

Will all the sons of light
Reveal their deities to earthly sight,
And walk upon the floor of earth,
Suffering an earthly blight
To stain their robes of mirth?

OKEANIS.

Phoibos the beautiful will be away,
Who may not come on earth, except to serve,
Because he is to reign for evermore.

TITANS.

Only the shadowy Three
Do I, who know the rest, desire to see,
If they unveil their awful face.
I too am god; to me
They might do so much grace.

OKEANIS.

Prometheus says they do not lift their veils,
But they will sing to us behind the veil,
The great felicities of worthy men.

THE END.

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